Moffett

JESUS AND HIS ENEMIES

Text: Luke 6:27, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."

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I think the saddest thing in the history of the world is the way the man who came to be a loving friend to everyone made more enemies than anyone the world has ever known. Jesus came to save the world, and the world hated him. "He came unto his own," says John, "and his own received him not."

Even before he was born, the world was rude to him. You remember how he was turned away from the inn to be born in a stable, the little Babe of Bethlehem. Surely everyone would love a baby. The shepherds and the wise men did, and were kind to him. But no--not every one loved this baby. Already he had an enemy. The King himself. And Herod's soldiers ~~were~~ soon tramping the streets of Bethlehem about their bloody work, while mothers shrieked in vain to save their children from the slaughter. He was only a baby, but already his enemies wanted to kill him.

Even in the curious legends manufactured about his childhood by later Christian generations, Jesus is always troubled by enemies. In Nazareth the other children refuse to play with him. At school, a teacher strikes him when Jesus proves him wrong.

When Jesus becomes a man the picture does not change. ~~His herald and forerunner~~, John the Baptist is put into prison and beheaded. He preaches a sermon in his own home town--his first sermon--and it makes him so many enemies that he barely escapes with his life. The whole congregation rises up in church and seizes him and rushes him out to throw him over a cliff.

~~After that~~, In the short three years of his work on earth, he made enemies on every hand ~~right and left~~. Everything he did seemed to be wrong. If he made friends, it was with the wrong sort of people, "publicans and sinners"--so the "good" people became his enemies. (Mk.5:30) If he did good deeds, it was on the wrong day, the Jewish holy day, the Sabbath--so the religious people became his enemies. (Mk 3:1-6). If he said that God ~~loved man like a~~ was his Father, that was blasphemy--so the theologians became his enemies. (Jn 5:18). If the people follow him, that is revolution--so the government becomes his enemy. From every side his enemies gather to plot to kill him, and in the end they do kill him. We know too well how one of his own disciples betrayed him, and his friends forsook him, and his countrymen cried, "Kill him", and his government crucified him. He was a man of enemies, and he still has enemies today. That is one of the strange things about him. He still makes enemies. Nobody cares anymore about even the bad men of long ago. They are dead and forgotten now. Ahab and Nero have no enemies now. But in every generation Jesus has new enemies.

Now a man with so many enemies, past and present, must have been either very, very bad, or very, very good; and Jesus, whatever else he may have been, was a very good man. Even non-Christians are quite willing to admit that. And nowhere is the supreme quality of his moral goodness better seen than in his attitude to his enemies.

You ~~would~~ might expect a man, hounded and persecuted from the cradle to the grave as he was to develop fearful, furtive ways, ~~perhaps~~--to cringe from opposition like the beaten wrecks of the concentration camps, and to seek safety in compromise and false confessions. But there is no such fear in Jesus, and when he speaks, he speaks the truth with authority. Or you might expect him to develop a bitter, reactionary attitude, and a burning desire for revenge. But Jesus seeks no revenge, and even when his enemies kill him, he asks God to forgive them. They are not just the ~~very ones who are putting him to death~~. These are the two points that impress me most about Jesus' attitude to his enemies:

1. He does not give in to them. He rather seeks to win them.
2. He cannot hate them, because he loves them.

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It may help us as Christians to meet what opponents we may have today if we look more closely at this double attitude of Jesus toward his enemies.

First, Jesus did not give in to them. He refused to sacrifice his principles simply because them were unpopular, or because people opposed them. The rulers of the Jews told him, "You can't heal the sick on the Sabbath". But Jesus knew that the law of love was a higher law than the law of the sabbath. It was never wrong to heal the sick, and he went right on with his works of mercy. It was harder to stand up against the people. They wanted a King. They wanted Jesus to lead them victorious against the bitter oppression of Roman imperialism. But Jesus refused, and many that had followed him left him and turned against him. It made him enemies, but he could not compromise. His kingdom, he knew, was not of this world, and the great enemy was sin, not Rome.

This is a hard lesson to learn. It is easier to give in, as the Western Church did to Constantine, and as others have done since. One of the great riddles of the history of the Church in China is what happened to the Christianity which came to China 1300 years ago in the great T'ang dynasty. In the 7th c. we see it overcoming great persecutions under the Empress Wu Hou. In the days of the poets Li Po and Tu Fu it began to exercise great influece in the golden court. It established churches and monasteries, and won converts among the great people of the realm. Then suddenly it vanished. In the year 987 a Syrian missionary returned to Baghdad and reported, "There remains not one single Christian in China." What happened? Persecution? But that early Chinese Church had already endured persecution and came through victorious. What was the reason then? Well, one reason at least, historians say, is simply that it grew tired, and gave in to its enemies. It compromised. It sacrificed its principles for peace. But once Christian principles have been surrendered, there is no longer any excuse for a church to exist. So the Church of the T'angs disappeared almost without a trace.

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Jesus surrendered himself, but not the truth to his enemies. But he does more than merely stand up for the truth. He goes farther. He is not afraid to counter-attack and try to win his enemies to his own point of view. You remember the day when the Pharisees and Sadducees crowded about him, hurling questions at him, trying to trip him up. First it was a question about taxes. Then about heaven. Then about the law. But each thrust Jesus parries and answers with the cool skill of a master debater. He can't be trapped. He is concerned, however, about more than evading traps. He wants to convert these questioners. Suddenly he sees a chance. In one of the questions, the one about the greatest commandment, he sees a point where he doesn't have to disagree with his enemy, and he is quick to answer in a way that will show their agreement, not their differences. So suddenly the surprised enemy finds himself completely agreeing with this dangerous radical, Jesus Christ; and Jesus and says, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God" (Mk 12:28f). While there was the least hope of winning them to the truth, Jesus refused to give up his enemies as lost.

This brings us to the second point. The basic principle in all Jesus dealings with his enemies was love. Love for enemies? That was a hard point to understand. How can a man love his enemies? Some, even among the Christians didn't try to understand it, and they invented curious legends about Jesus being more natural and taking revenge on his enemies. One of these strange legends of his boyhood tells about the day the children of Nazareth refused to play with little Jesus, so he turns them all into animals. Another day a boy purposely runs into him, and Jesus, angry, kills him a word. Then there is the one about now at school, Jesus gets into an argument with his teacher, and the teacher loses his temper and hits him. Jesus simply touches his arm, and it withers away. Then he throws him down dead.

But that is not Jesus Christ. It is a completely false picture. It may be the natural way for a man to act toward his enemies, but it is exactly the way Jesus did not act toward his enemies. Though they beat him, and reviled him, and finally cru-

There is no victory in a negative crusade. If conquering communism is to be stopped at all, it will be stopped only by the positive power of a greater faith and a better life, and a deeper love. There is only one power that can conquer hate, and that is the power of love.

cified him, he would not and he could not hate them. He would not ~~and he could not~~ strike back. He could only love, and in love he could only look back to forgive them.

Today we say, "Well, that is very fine, but it is not a practical attitude. After all, look what happened to Jesus. He was killed, wasn't he? And what did love get his disciples? James had his head cut off; Peter was crucified head down; Andrew was nailed to crossed poles--in fact one tradition says that all the disciples except John were violently put to death. That's what loving you enemies gets you--death and a cross!"

But is that all it gets you? Was Jesus really defeated? Not the Jesus I take as my Lord and Master, the Jesus Christ who rose again in ~~the~~ love's greatest triumph ~~of love~~ over evil ~~in history~~--the resurrection. And not Peter and James and John, who knew very well that it was better to love and die for Christ, than live and hate. And which really was more practical, anyway?--the scheming hatreds and brutalities of Roman politicians and generals, or the ~~deathless~~ love of those simple Christians who followed Jesus Christ ~~in that early church~~ --that strange and curious, gentle love ~~of their~~ that counted no man as irredeemable foe, that leaped beyond the barriers of race and tongue and class, a love that laughed at all Rome's armies, and shook the throne itself, and turned the world upside down; a love that took its captors captive, and made its enemies friends.

I said that Jesus had more enemies than any man in history. Yes, that is true, but wait, it is not the end. But don't forget this, ~~too~~. He also has more friends than any man since time began, because every general makes new enemies, for that is the power of his redeeming love. It changes enemies into friends.

This is ~~xxx finally~~ what poor, tired Napoleon saw at last, ~~as he ended his world-conquering career~~ The conqueror was a prisoner on a tiny island. He had tried the other way--the short-cut to a better-ordered world, and his laws had been beautiful things. But at the end he said something like this, I don't remember the exact words: "Alexander and Caesar and I--we built our empires on force, and failed. Jesus is building his empire on love, and love never fails."

Don't forget

~~This is~~ the love that never fails: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you."

505 – What a friend
225 – Jesus Shall Reign

[illegible]

Maybe you remember what I said last night. Because believe in J.X. A good [illegible] [illegible] giving to let you get away, that really. That's how you [illegible] – let go. How can I believe.

Listen (Jn 17:25 – O Righteous [illegible] all we know that you are my daughter [illegible] you have [illegible] anything.

Okay?

Jesus + Enemies

I feel almost as if I should apologize to you for intruding into such a beautiful day with such an ugly subject. I am going to speak on hate.

I have been doing a good deal of thinking these last two years in Communist China about the Christians' attitude toward his enemies. We were surrounded by enemies, and hate enveloped us like a cloud. Gigantic anti-American parades and rallies; the great "hate weeks" whipping the populace into a frenzy; the deadly drumfire of spite-filled propaganda; inflammatory posters on our very gates. The "Protect-our homes-resist American aggression" committee hdqrs. for our section of town was placed right next to our house, and one of its duties was to see that our gate posts were kept freshly plastered with venomous cartoons + slogans — (just to make us feel at home.)

I must confess that all this began to have its effect on us. We became rather bitter. It wasn't fair. We had no political connections. We had come simply to help China + its people — to bring them the greatest gift that was in our power to give — the gospel of Jesus Christ. And was this our reward? Hatred and slander? ~~And~~ We began to resent it

But when I went to my Bible my resentment vanished. ~~For~~ This was no abnormal, uncalled for thing — it was how the world always has + always will treat real Christians. It was how the world treated my Lord + Master, whom I have vowed to follow to the end. When I see what they did to Jesus, how can I complain of what they do to me.

After all, who came into a more hostile world than J.X

~~Look back for a moment, look back at Jesus.~~ I think the saddest thing in the history of the world is the fact that He who came to be a Saviour and friend to

These are the 2 pts:

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(2) And I speak of them this morning, not because I expect you to have to face the concentrated enmity of the comm., – you may, but I hope not – No, I rather speak of it because if you become true disciples of Jesus Christ, there will come times when you must face the enmity + scorn of a world that knows Him not. You must stand + face it as a Xn. – or deny your Lord. It is not always easy to be a Xn. even on this side of the iron curtain.

How then do you face this enmity? Face it as did Jesus Christ!

① Jesus did not give in to his enemies. There are Xns. who think that we should have no enemies; that everyone is a friend + brother. But Jesus had no part in this false + sentimental Xty that is willing to sacrifice truth for the sake of love. Jesus had his enemies + he recognized them as enemies. He refused to sacrifice his principles simply because they were unpopular —

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(3) Today that same spirit of compromise is the greatest enemy the Ch. in China faces. Not persecution, but compromise, like that of one man, once at least a Xn., who said – "We must cooperate with the Comm. Xty wants a better world. Comm. are bldg. a better world. They are better Xns. than we." That is the most insidious danger the ch. faces – a compromise that is blind both to the truths of Xty + to the lies of Communism.

Jesus could never surrender like that. He could surrender himself but not the truth. And thk God there are Chinese Xns. who can never surrender like that: "I don't adapt my faith!"

But our Lord does more than merely stand up for the truth. —

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(4) Now make no mistake. I'm not a fatalist. I believe the Bible clearly teaches that wars are sometimes just + necessary. But that is on another level than the one I'm on today. And war is not a solution. It is only a temporary expedient – a necessary expedient – but not a solution. The only solution is the love of God in Christ – reaching out thru us into the whole world.

And will it work? I said that

"Into a Hostile World"

I wish I could find it in me to soothe you with cheerful words tonight. I wish I could tell you that the world you will find when you leave this lovely spot is as peaceful and serene and friendly as the beautiful Genesee Valley. But I have come here to intrude with a word of warning. "Don't be deceived. You are going out into a hard and hostile world."

Some will be against you because you are teachers, egg-heads. A friend of mine was riding in a street-car past a Philadelphia college, just as the students were pouring out of the campus. The man next to him became positively excited with hostility. "Look at them – going to college. That's the trouble with the world – too much education. They all ought to have to go out and earn a living the hard way." There's a hostile world right here and you.

And there is the even larger hostility you will find because you're Americans. Not Still more people will be against you. Not many people in this country know how really unpopular they are. Undeservedly so – but the fact remains: You are unpopular. Have you ever looked at yourselves through Asiatic eyes. I have, and it is not a very pleasant experience: a soft, white rich American. What does he know of our problems. And what does he care. There is a whole world out there against you.

And stirring up the world against you is, perhaps, the greatest power-force in the world today: world communism, concentrating all the malevolence of the most effective propaganda campaign on earth, intent making the world hate you.

It is a hostile, hateful world you're about to face. And what can I possibly tell you now to prepare you for it. Of course I have a word for you – I'm a preacher, and we are always loaded with good advice. You may not like this advice, but I give it to you. Not mine alone

Jesus & Enemies

"Into a Hostile World"

Now we go out into a hostile world, a world of enemies? All right: —
"Love your enemies; do good to them that hate

The Communists, of course, think that is a lot of nonsense. They are hard-headed, practical realists. They have faith & hope, but not love. Love is too weak. They ~~believe in~~ have faith, hope & hate, & the most immediately effective of these is hate.

Some Christians don't believe in love either. Letter & ~~life~~.

But hope I proceed to cast the mote out of that good woman's eye, let me confess & the beam that has been in my own. For 2 years in China under the comm. we were surrounded by enemies & hatred enveloped us like a cloud.

I wish I could find it in me to soothe you with cheerful words tonight But